

TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB.

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BULLETIN OF THE TASMANIAN FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB.

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Next Meeting:

Thursday, 20th February 1969 at 7.45 p.m. in the Royal Society Room, Tasmanian Museum, Argyle Street.

This will be the Club's Annual General Meeting. After the general business session, which will include the presentation of reports and the election of officers for the coming year, Mrs Stephens will screen a film entitled "Bee City" - showing life in the hive.

Next Field Outing:

At the time of printing this Bulletin, details of a field outing had not been finalised. It will probably be on Saturday, 23rd February, to start from Blackman's Bay, proceeding through the area previously visited after the bushfire of 1967.

New Members:

Mr and Mrs Linton-Coombe were elected at the November meeting, and a nomination was received from Mr K.A.Kelly.

Annual Subscriptions:

These are now due. The rates are:-

Ordinary member:	\$2.50
Junior member (under 16):	\$1.00
Family group:	\$3.50

The Cape Barren Goose:

The Australian Conservation Foundation feels very strongly that the Cape Barren Goose should be preserved as part of the Australian scene, and preferably not as a hard-to-see-rarity. It believes that the situation would best be met by a two stage programme of conservation & management:-

- (1) The dedication, as inviolate sanctuaries, of the more important nesting islands in each of the four groups inhabited by the goose.
- (2) The removal of stock from some of the islands at present used for grazing sheep, as well as establishing areas of improved pasture on some islands and in those parts of the mainland visited by the summer flocks. The latter would also provide feeding areas relatively safe from contamination with pesticide residues.

(The above material is extracted from a brochure, 'The Cape Barren Goose' which is one of a series of brochures on fauna conservation. Copies of this, or other, brochures can be obtained, free of charge, from the Director, Australian Conservation Foundation, P.O.Box 91, Eastwood. 2122)

Macquarie Island and its Rabbits:

This subject has been in the news recently with the announcement that the European rabbit flea is soon to be released on this island in an attempt to control its rabbit population. The following extracts are from an article written for the Tasmanian Journal of Agriculture by one of the Department's Research Officers.

Macquarie Island is a wildlife sanctuary under the provisions of the Animals and Birds Protection Act of 1928.

The climate is most inhospitable with the temperature varying very little from 40°F. Rain falls virtually every day, the relative humidity exceeds 90% on the average, wind gusts exceeding 60 m.p.h. are frequent in every month, and the average amount of sunshine over a full year is a mere 1.8 hours per day.

It seems that sealers liberated rabbits there about 1880 to give themselves an emergency food supply. Since then the rabbit population has reached plague proportions.

Damage caused by the rabbits is of two types - erosion and plant damage, the latter being the more severe. Grazing damage to the native flora is of major extent and leads ultimately to the development of a 'pasture' dominated by the common burr (or 'buzzie').

The rabbits themselves are very large by Tasmanian standards, averaging about 4½ lbs in weight with an occasional animal as heavy as 6 lbs. As a general rule, warm-blooded animals of the same species tend to grow bigger in cold regions than in warmer regions. A large body size for such animals means a higher ratio of body heat produced to body heat lost through radiation, and even rabbits must keep warm to survive.

Despite the very high breeding rate during the short breeding season, there are very few young rabbits in the population. This tends to indicate that the feral cat and the Southern Skua - a gull-like bird - are quite efficient rabbit predators. Unfortunately they are not efficient enough to limit the rabbit population to an acceptable level; but they will prove valuable allied with any large-scale rabbit control programme.

Did You Know That......thirty five is probably an average number for the legs on a centipede? Some may have as many as 173 pairs, others having only 15.

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